

THE Hillel Herald



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KIDS  KHDS



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*Above left: We had the honor of welcoming **Moshe Lion**, Mayor of Jerusalem, as KHDS Board President **Daniel J. Katz** toured him through our amazing campus.*



2 From the Administration



Rabbi Mordechai Schwersenski,
Head of School

The Courage to Listen: Cultivating a Culture of “Yet” at KHDS

As I stepped into my first year as Head of School at Katz Hillel Day School, I found myself standing at a crossroads familiar to any leader. I felt a tension between the desire for excellence and the vulnerability required to achieve it. To truly understand the pulse of our school, I knew we needed to hear from our most vital partners, our parents. However, I’ll admit I was hesitant. I wondered: Is it too soon? Have I built enough trust to ask for this level of honesty? Should we wait until things feel more “settled”?

When I brought these hesitations to the KHDS leadership team, I expected a cautious debate. Instead, I met a unanimous and immediate consensus. *“Of course we should do it. We need the feedback because we need to know where and how to grow.”*

This moment was a profound testament to our school’s culture. It wasn’t just an administrative decision; it was a demonstration of a mindset embedded within the KHDS community. In an environment where we strive for high achievement, it is easy to fall into the trap of wanting to appear perfect. But true leadership, and true education, requires the humility to recognize that we are always a work in progress.

It is no coincidence that Moshe Rabbeinu, our greatest leader, is not described as being the most courageous or the most decisive. Rather, the Torah describes him as: *“וְהָיָה מֹשֶׁה עֲנוּן מְאֹד מִכֹּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה”*—*“Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man that was upon the face of the earth”* (Numbers 12:3). Humility is the root of great leadership.



Lev Stark, Executive Director

If you ever want a thrilling behind-the-scenes look at school life, skip the classroom and come sit in my office for a day. You will witness emails that begin with “quick question,” phone calls that start with “I’m sure this is easy,” and the quiet realization that nothing at a school is ever actually quick or easy.

As the person overseeing finances, operations, facilities, and security at KHDS, I spend my days juggling numbers, systems, and the occasional surprise that absolutely did not appear on the calendar. While I do not assign homework or give tests, I am constantly reminded that growth mindset is alive and well outside the classroom.

Let’s start with finances. A school budget is best described as a carefully balanced plan that immediately begins testing your optimism. Each year we learn something new about our priorities, our assumptions, and how many things can be labeled “non-negotiable.” Growth mindset helps us look at those moments not as setbacks but as lessons in planning smarter, thinking creatively, and occasionally laughing at ourselves.

Operations and facilities are equally committed to keeping things interesting. Everything works perfectly until the exact moment it does not. When that happens, growth mindset is what keeps us focused on solutions instead of stress. It turns problems into puzzles and reminds us that every adjustment makes the system a little stronger than it was before.

It is the quality that enables us to set aside our egos and embrace a true growth mindset.

This philosophy is championed by Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck, who introduced the world to the **“Power of Yet.”** Dweck argues that shifting our language from “I can’t do this” to “I can’t do this yet” changes the entire chemistry of learning. It transforms a perceived failure into an opportunity for growth. In any organization, especially a school, the ability to “fail forward,” to take risks, receive feedback, and pivot, is the difference between stagnation and transformation. At KHDS, we don’t just teach this to our students in the classroom; we live this in our hallways, on our fields and courts, and in our offices. The results of the parent survey have been far more than just “data.” They have provided us with a roadmap, a clear view of our strengths, and, more importantly, a constructive look at our opportunities for improvement. Our leadership team views this feedback not as a critique of the past, but as an investment in our future.

As we move forward, I am energized by the partnership we are building. A growth mindset is firmly at the center of everything we do, from the way our teachers refine their craft to the way our lay leadership plans for our future. We look forward to continuing this journey together—parents, educators, and students alike—ensuring that at KHDS, the “Power of Yet” is not just a slogan on the wall but the heartbeat of our school community.



Security planning may not sound humorous, but it does have its moments. It requires constant attention, reassessment, and learning, often in ways that no one ever sees. When things are going well, the highest compliment is that no one notices at all. Growth mindset ensures that we are always improving quietly, thoughtfully, and responsibly.

Most of this work happens far from the spotlight. When operations are smooth, finances are stable, and systems are working, it looks effortless. It is not effortless, but it is intentional. Like our students, the school itself is always learning how to do things better.

Our tradition reminds us of this in Pirkei Avot (chapter 4, mishnah 1.) when it teaches, *אֵיזוֹהוּ חָכָם? הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל אָדָם*. Who is wise? One who learns from every person. Wisdom is not about having everything figured out. It is about staying open to learning, especially when things do not go exactly as planned. That lesson feels especially relevant in a job where surprises are part of the daily routine.

At KHDS, growth mindset is not just something we teach. It is something we live, one budget revision, system update, and unexpected phone call at a time. And while the learning curve can be steep, the goal is always the same: to build a school that is thoughtful, resilient, and always getting better.



Hadassah Smolarcik
Judaic Studies Principal, Grades 1-8

“I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”
 - Thomas A. Edison

Thomas Edison was an American inventor who developed many technologies that shaped the modern world. He continued working into his 80s and acquired 1,093 patents in his lifetime! He changed history and had something very important to say about failure—failure is part of the process of success. Failure and its consequences help children develop skills to gain autonomy and competence for later in life.

As a young child, my favorite book—and one that I constantly read to my own children—was *The Little Engine That Could*. In the story, the smallest engine is the one who volunteers to help get the toys and dolls over the mountain. The small engine, as it climbed the mountain, kept repeating, “I think I can, I think I can,” and eventually made it to the other side of the mountain.

It is this pushing and persevering that we need to teach our children. Like all non-cognitive skills, this needs to be modeled for our children. Let’s teach our children to keep trying. Setting goals and then celebrating and sharing the triumphs **and failures** with our children will teach them that it is okay to fail and then help them to keep on working towards the goal even on the second, third...and fifteenth try.

If you bake Challah, you know that the recipe calls for “punching down” the dough after the initial rise. Why do this when it is the very antithesis of what we are trying to accomplish? Actually, “punching down the dough” allows the gas bubbles trapped inside to be released and enables the dough to rise even more. Perhaps we should apply this concept to our lives and the lives of our children—sometimes being punched down can serve as the impetus to rise even higher. No one asks for challenges or serious mistakes, but if we find ourselves in a difficult situation—think of the challah dough!



In Hebrew class, 3rd and 4th graders learned about prepositions and had a great time playing “Simon Says” using their new Hebrew words in a fun and interactive way!



In honor of Parshat Vayera, our B'not Sherut welcomed students in grades 1–3 into their special tent for a fun and engaging activity! They played games, enjoyed delicious snacks with their hosts, and learned all about the mitzvah of hachnasat orchim, welcoming guests, just like Avraham and Sarah did.



4th and 5th graders made sand art creations as a special Parshat Vayera activity.



Students who earn a spot on the Gemara Wall of Fame demonstrate deep understanding and strong comprehension of the Gemara material.



An inside look: **Morah Hadassah** took time out to read one-on-one with 1st and 2nd graders.

4 From the Administration



Shireen Butman
General Studies Principal, Grades 1-5

Recently, I watched a reel by Aaron Dinin, a professor at Duke University, known for speaking about the value of struggle and decision-making in life and learning. In the video “*Hard to believe this happened almost...*” Dinin reminds us that sometimes the most powerful growth doesn’t come from smooth success, but from navigating ambiguity, challenge, and unexpected setbacks.

While Dinin’s message is rooted in adult life and professional growth, the core ideas connect seamlessly to what we strive to teach our Lower School students every day: **that challenges are not obstacles to avoid, but opportunities to grow stronger, smarter, and more confident learners.** A growth mindset means understanding that skills and confidence are built through effort, through challenge, and through reflection on our experiences, even when they don’t go perfectly the first time.

In his work, Dinin emphasizes that real learning often requires stepping into situations where we don’t already know the answer, where ambiguity exists, and where perseverance becomes essential. This aligns closely with our belief that meaningful learning isn’t always linear. Children learn to:

- Embrace challenges instead of avoiding them
- Build grit by trying again and again with guidance and encouragement

At school, our teachers intentionally design or assign activities where students practice decision-making and critical thinking, whether it’s tackling a tricky math problem, working together on a group project, or navigating a classroom discussion. These opportunities help students learn that feeling uncertain or stuck doesn’t mean they’ve failed. Instead, it’s a sign they are *stretching their abilities* and practicing real life skills.

We encourage families to continue this conversation at home by asking questions like:

- “What was something you tried recently that felt hard, but you kept working on it?”
- “How did you keep going or figure it out?”

By encouraging effort, reflection, and resilience, we help children develop not just academic success but the inner strength to handle life’s real challenges with confidence.

Thank you for partnering with us in fostering a growth mindset and resilience in your children.



Lunch Bunch Fridays with **Mrs. Butman** is always a fantastic time filled with laughter, good conversation about school, a meaningful story, and of course—snacks! This special gathering for elementary school students is a wonderful way to celebrate those who demonstrate outstanding middot, kindness, and a strong work ethic. We’re so proud of the students who were recognized and enjoyed this time together.



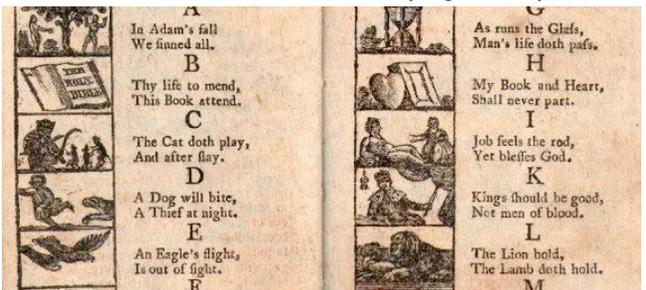
2nd graders learned about the three states of matter—solids, liquids, and gases—through fun, hands-on exploration! To see these states in action, they made root beer floats, observing how ice cream (solid), root beer (liquid), and bubbles (gas) work together. It was a sweet and exciting way to bring science to life!



Hands-on science! 3rd grade students dissected lima and pinto beans to discover the fascinating parts they’ve been studying.



In social studies, students explored life in Colonial America by learning about *The New England Primer*, the small instructional books children used to learn reading and writing. After discussing what education was like without modern supplies or technology, students had the opportunity to create their own page of a primer.





Rina Lanner
General Studies Principal, Middle School

On a recent family vacation, one of my family members was terrified to participate in a specific activity (including bats and alligators!). But with encouragement from the rest of us, they decided to try anyway. When they finally went, they felt a mix of fear and excitement, but by the time they reached the end, they were beaming with pride. They couldn't stop talking about how amazing it

felt to push through their fear. That experience shows how much courage and growth come from trying, even when something seems hard or scary at first.

Some of the greatest leaders in history started out unsure of themselves and faced many obstacles. Moshe Rabbeinu, the leader of Bnei Yisrael and the transmitter of the Torah, had a speech impediment. When Hashem first asked Moshe to speak to Pharaoh and lead the Jewish people, Moshe believed he was not fit for the task because he struggled with speaking. Yet despite this challenge, Moshe became the greatest teacher in Jewish history. His weakness did not prevent his success; instead, he grew into his role through effort, perseverance, and emunah.

Abraham Lincoln, one of the most respected presidents in United States history, failed many times before reaching success. He lost several elections, failed in business, and faced years of disappointment. Instead of giving up, he kept trying. Lincoln once said, "My great concern is not whether you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure." His life shows that failure does not mean you are incapable; it means you are still growing.

Many students feel discouraged when they struggle and think, "I'm just not good at this." While this feeling is common, it can prevent learning and improvement. This is where a growth mindset becomes important. A growth mindset is the belief that abilities can improve with effort, practice, and time. Your brain is not fixed. Every challenge you face helps your brain grow stronger.

Learning happens through effort and mistakes. When you practice something difficult, your brain forms new connections that help you improve. Think about skills you have now that you did not have when you were younger. You did not instantly know how to read, write, or solve math problems. You learned by trying, making mistakes, and trying again. The same process applies to everything you learn today.

Mistakes are not signs of weakness; they are signs of growth. Students with a growth mindset understand that struggling is part of learning. Instead of saying, "I can't do this," they say, "I can't do this yet," and keep going. A growth mindset is not about being perfect. It is about believing that, like the great leaders before you and even someone overcoming a simple fear on a family vacation, you can grow beyond challenges and achieve more than you think is possible.



8th Grade Committees is a program offered as a way for students to step up, show leadership, and follow through on meaningful projects. At the beginning of the trimester, our 8th graders had the opportunity to choose the committees where they felt they could make the biggest impact. Our 8th grade Kumzits Committee, led by faculty advisor **Rabbi Mirzeoff**, organized a meaningful and uplifting Kumzits in honor of Rosh Chodesh Kislev. Committee members coordinated the entire experience, preparing and presenting a beautiful D'var Torah that helped set the tone for the new month.



In connection with the bracha of the month, Asher Yatzar, middle school students heard from guest speakers **Rabbi Deon Nathan** and KHDS parent **Dr. Danny Aghion** about their powerful experiences as kidney donors. Their stories highlighted the incredible gift of health and the profound impact of saving a life.



6th graders used a number line to subtract integers.



Students enjoyed the beautiful weather while practicing math skills.



6 From the Administration



Gwenn Baer
Early Childhood Principal

In the Rosalind Henwood Early Childhood Learning Center, we believe that learning is not just about what children know, but about the importance of the process. Every day, we intentionally cultivate a growth mindset, one that values curiosity, persistence, reflection, and the understanding that growth happens over time and through experience.

Young children are constantly learning how to navigate their emotions, relationships, and environment. When we approach challenges as opportunities rather than obstacles, we send a powerful message: mistakes are part of learning, feelings are valid, and effort matters. Our classrooms are designed to support this philosophy by encouraging problem-solving, collaboration, and resilience, while honoring each child individually.

A critical part of fostering this mindset is our teachers. Our early childhood program is led by morot who value these processes and are committed to learning and growing themselves. Professional development is essential to our growth. Our morot value the whole child and create hands-on and fun learning experiences.

This year, our early childhood teachers attended a conference featuring **Dr. Sharon Arbel**, focused on *Sensory Integration and Emotional Regulation in the Classroom*. This learning is especially meaningful, as it directly supports our commitment to helping children understand their bodies, manage big emotions, and develop the tools they need to self-regulate and thrive. Sensory awareness and emotional regulation are foundational skills that allow children to feel safe, confident, and ready to learn.

Together, through intentional teaching, continued learning and growth, and a shared belief in each child's potential, we build a nurturing environment where children feel supported, capable, and empowered to grow.



Mazal Tov! EC3-B learned about Parashat Chayei Sara with a mock wedding.



On November 7th, parents, grandparents, and special guests joined their little ones for a special EC Oneg under the "tent" for Parshat Vayera. After the Oneg, each child brought their guests back to the classroom to practice the mitzvah of Hachnasat Orchim.

Bye Bye Beresheit

EC said "Bye Bye" to Sefer Beresheit at this special event motzei Shabbos January 3rd. A collaborative art reveal took place along with games, prizes, and snacks. The students were so happy to see their morahs! Thank you to **Deborah Plotsker** and **Cara Beim** for planning the event and to **Lori Landa** for coordinating all of the details!

Photo Credit: Shlomi Cohen/iPictureMagnet





Ayala Baum
 Director of Student Support Services

In the Hebrew language, the nuances and relationships of words lend a deeper meaning, so much so that even the switching of two letters lends to deep insight.

The word “Lehitgaber” להִתְגַּבֵּר means to overcome or prevail through a challenge. The root of this word is literally the word for heroism and might: Gibor גִּבּוֹר. By switching just two letters around, we get the word Lehitbager לְהִתְבַּגֵּר which means “to grow up” or “mature” from the root בִּגְרָה. This illustrates the most crucial aspect of what is known as “growth mindset.” The struggle **IS** the most important part of the process. Without the struggle, there can be no growth. When a student has a struggle academically, emotionally, or even socially, these are pivotal opportunities to teach grit and endurance through trial, error, and more trial in order to get to the heroic prevailing moments.

As educators and parents, we are the ones tasked with providing lessons that are derived from failure or challenge and, most importantly, focusing on the lesson itself rather than the outcome overall. A “growth mindset” for students who are divergent learners or who are atypical neurologically means that we must provide opportunities for celebrating effort over outcome and focus on the importance of failure as a stepping stone to resilience. We must equip these learners with alternative tools or approaches to academic tasks that allow them to perform successfully through diverse methodologies. We must shift the mindset from “can’t learn” to “can’t stop trying a different way to teach.”

There is a popular video by Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski that explores how a lobster grows and uses that process to illustrate what we can learn from stress and uncomfortable situations. In order to grow, crustaceans must molt their outer body or shell. This is a very painful process, and yet, without it, the animal would not grow. Growth is not easy, and the painful moments, if framed as ‘lessons,’ will enable the mind to grow and allow the student to triumph...to become a Gibor.

READING ACROSS THE GRADES



Before the Thanksgiving break, middle schoolers hosted a special Read-A-Thon during Advisory with early childhood students—sharing stories, smiles, and a love of reading.



REMEMBERING DANNIE GRAJOWER

18 Cheshvan marked the 7th yearzeit of **Mrs. Dannie Grajower, Z"l**, one of our beloved teachers. **Morah Hadassah** and **Morah Lanner** spoke to the middle school students about her everlasting impact on KHDS and the legacy she has left behind.



KHDS SUPPORTS TEACH FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST



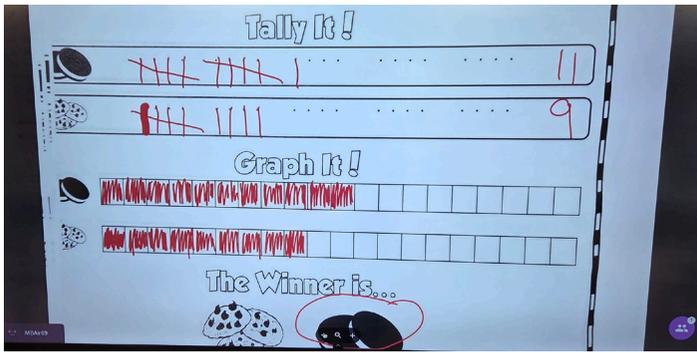
Thank you to those who represented KHDS and our community at the *Teach Florida Annual Legislative Breakfast* on November 9th. Through the incredible advocacy of Teach Florida, our families continue to benefit from vital state support—saving on average \$8,685 per child and ensuring that Florida’s Jewish schools receive over \$150 million in scholarships and \$20 million in security funding annually.



8 HilleLites

YOUR VOTE COUNTS! Election day at KHDS!

Students conducted class elections to learn about the voting process. They voted by secret ballot for their favorite cookie (Oreos or Chips Ahoy!) and tallied results to calculate the winner. Each class celebrated their winning choice with a special treat!



Honoring Those Who Served: THANK YOU, VETERANS!

In honor of Veterans Day, our 3rd grade accelerated math classes celebrated by practicing their multiplication facts through a special color-by-number activity titled "Home of the Free Because of the Brave." This fun and meaningful exercise allowed students to combine math skills with a tribute to our veterans.



In honor of Veterans Day, **Mr. Gale** and **Mr. Doss** spoke to the middle school students about the importance of our veterans and our responsibility to recognize their courage and appreciate the safety and freedom we enjoy because of their service.

CHANUKAH EXTRAVAGANZA LIGHTS UP THE NIGHT

KHDS celebrated Chanukah in truly unforgettable fashion with the *Chanukah Extravaganza Picnic* held on December 18th, sponsored by KHDS and the KHDS PTA—complete with a spectacular drone show!

Lively sports activities on the front lawn were led by **Coach Moishe**, while students enjoyed bouncing in the bounce houses on the soccer field. Families picked up pizza, donuts, and latkes and enjoyed a picnic-style dinner together al fresco.

A meaningful menorah lighting was led by Head of School **Rabbi Schwersenski** in memory of **Chayim Dimont, Z"l**. The evening concluded with a breathtaking Chanukah-themed drone show that lit up the night sky and delighted the entire community.

This wonderful event was coordinated by the incredible PTA volunteer team of **Rachel Fraiman, Anna Jacobs, Avital Rosenberg, and Chava Weisstuch**. It truly could not have happened without the help of so many dedicated volunteers, and we thank everyone who contributed to making this night so special. A special shout-out to **Bridget Cohn, Rabbi Eisenberger**, and the entire maintenance crew for ensuring the event went off without a hitch.



NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY

Kol Hakavod to the 2026 **National Junior Honor Society** (NJHS) inductees. We are so proud of our students for reaching academic excellence!



- Isaac Amos*
- Rachel Avezbadalov*
- Ariel Blanka*
- Ruthie Epstein*
- Eliana Fraiman
- Noa Goldman*
- Tamar Lasry*
- Emunah Ohayon*
- Viviana Olsen*
- Leila Singer*
- Joseph Tarlowe
- Aliza Yetnikoff*

* new inductees

MILESTONE MOMENTS: SIDDIR & CHUMASH PARTIES



The milestone annual Siddur parties took place December 9th-11th for 1A, 1B, and 1C respectively as 1st graders were presented with their first Siddurim! Thank you to the **Schiffman family** for their continued generosity in sponsoring the siddurim in memory of **Susan Rubin, Z"l**

Special thanks to Kitah Alef teachers, **Morah Rebecca Kinzbrunner, Morah Shira Sharp, Morah Hana Marin, Morah Keren Bar Gimdani, Morah**

Miriam Klein, and Morah Melissa Wiesel. Thank you to parent volunteers **Claire Friedman, Joelle Karp, and Deena Weisfeld** for helping coordinate the food deliveries. And mazal tov to the 1st grade!



On November 19th, 2nd graders were presented with their first Chumashim at this milestone program. We thank **Drs. Jeffrey and Naomi Gross** for their continued generosity in sponsoring the Chumashim

in loving memory of **Tobie & William Wiener, Z"l**, who inspired generations of children to lead lives of Torah and Derech Eretz.

Thank you to our 2nd grade Judaics teachers **Morah Yona Lobel, Morah Rebecca Kinzbrunner, Morah Adi Rafaeli, Morah Keren Bar Gimdani,** and to supporting Judaics faculty **Morah Judy Negri, Morah Sima Ziv, and Morah Melissa Wiesel,** as well as the 2nd grade secular faculty **Ms. Hillary Edelson, Ms. Alexa Poulos, Mrs. Rebecca Pearlson, Mrs. Aly Schwarzer, and Mrs. Marilyn Hornstein.** Special thanks to KHDS faculty members **Rabbi Gershon Eisenberger, Simone Haddad, Susan Needleman, Bridget Cohn,** and the maintenance team for their assistance and participation in making this a beautiful program.



Visit our online photo galleries to view more pictures. Siddur and Chumash Photo Credits: Shlomi Cohen/iPictureMagnet

MINI MU MATH COMPETITION: A Proud Moment!

Over 280 students from 40 South Florida schools came together on November 9th to compete in the *Mini Mu Math Competition*, hosted at The Jewish Leadership Academy.

We are incredibly proud of all our lower and middle school students who represented our school with enthusiasm and focus. Their hard work, dedication, and love of math truly shined.

A huge Kol Hakavod to three outstanding students who placed in the Top 10 of their divisions:

- David Romanoff (3rd Grade)**
- Charlie David (6th Grade)**
- Lia Fridman-Rubin (6th Grade)**



EC WINTER FEST 2026

Before the winter break, our early childhood students enjoyed a series of joyful celebrations filled with fun, laughter, and special memories during Winter Fest! Special programming included a magical bubble show, Winter Fest fun day, and a cozy Pancake Breakfast & Pajama Day. It was a heartwarming way to celebrate the season and head into winter break with smiles all around.



3RD GRADE VISITS THE SOUTH FLORIDA FAIR

3rd graders enjoyed an exciting field trip to the South Florida Fair, where they learned about local agriculture and how food travels from farm to table. Students met farmers and scientists, saw a newborn calf, explored historic buildings, and even cheered on the pig races! The experience will inspire their upcoming KHDS State Fair, where students will showcase what they're learning about the 50 United States.



3RD GRADE RASHI FAIR

On December 17th, the 3rd grade students put on an epic "Rashi Fair" performance where the children spoke and sang about Rashi's life and contributions to our lives and the connection to Chanukah. While Rashi lived over 900 years ago, his commentary is learned daily throughout the Torah world.

Thank you to **Morah Peninah Salid** and **Morah Rachel Nassy**, along with their assistants, **Ayelet Guttman** and **Morah Chavi Peikes**. We are also grateful to **Simone Haddad** for her beautiful piano accompaniment.



Photo Credit: Shlomi Cohen/iPictureMagnet



12 Spotlight by Grade



Fun, fitness, and friends during EC PE!



Rabbi G and his Olive Press Workshop visited for hands-on fun.



Early Childhood

In honor of Parashat Chayei Sarah, EC4-B enjoyed exploring clouds in science.

Tiny details, big learning!



EC2 students enjoyed baby doll circle time with Mrs. Davis!!

We're all smiles out on Aunt Jessie's Playground.



EC3 builders measure up!



Brrr...EC4-A learned about winter by bringing the Arctic to Boca and incorporating cold climates and animal habitats to sunny Florida. EC4-B made winter paintings by shading and blending beautiful blues!





Artists worked on their art gallery masterpieces.



Enjoying the cold weather with a playful snowball fight.



Kindergarten

Students gathered to learn, listen, and grow during Judaic Studies.



Future mathematicians mastered math skills through interactive learning.



Young scientists explored how magnetic energy works.



After learning about volcanoes, magma, and lava, students built their own clay volcanoes. After painting them, they combined baking soda and vinegar to create an eruption!



Girl power and fun on Aunt Jessie's Playground.



As part of our Brachot unit, the yeladim practiced blessings with a fun Bracha Lotto game.

1ST GRADE



As part of their Brachot unit, Kitah Alef made special Shehakol cups and learned the meaning of that Bracha!



Students practiced reading and davening from the siddur.

14 Spotlight by Grade



As part of the Top Score writing program, students learned to use an IRC (Introduction, Reasons, Conclusion) outline to plan their essays and turned their ideas into detailed sentences in paragraph format that support their main points.



Students dove into Chumash learning.



Students explored how tubular plants move water by conducting a celery experiment. They watched as the celery changed color while the dyed water traveled up its tiny tubes—showing exactly how plants “drink” and grow!

2ND GRADE



Students explored perpendicular lines through a fun and creative origami project. Using precise folds, they created small paper envelopes, applying their understanding of geometry in a hands-on way. Afterward, students wrote Thanksgiving letters to their parents and tucked them inside their handmade envelopes — a perfect blend of math, art, and gratitude.



Students explored even and odd numbers through a lively musical equal groups activity. When the music stopped, they quickly worked together to form equal groups based on the number called out—discovering which numbers could be shared evenly and which ones left “extras.” It was an energetic and hands-on way to build number sense and deepen their understanding of equal groups!



Students learned how to describe a picture in creative ways by writing beautiful sentences in Hebrew.



Students explored friction with a fun hands-on experiment using rice, a pencil, and a water bottle. By repeatedly inserting the pencil into the rice-filled bottle, they discovered how friction increases, eventually allowing them to lift the entire bottle using just the pencil!



Consistent practice is key to mastering multiplication tables. Accelerated math students explored new concepts in their textbooks and reinforced their skills through interactive games that strengthened their fact fluency.

3RD GRADE



To explore the science of light and reflection, students created kaleidoscopes! They learned that when light and reflective paper meet at certain angles, they produce beautiful, repeating patterns—showing how reflection works in a colorful and engaging way.



3rd grade thanks **Mrs. Pinkis** for guiding us in creating our hadlakat neiroit project in honor of our own Imahot. As we read the parshiot of Chayei Sarah and Toldot and learned about the Imahot of Klal Yisrael, we are grateful for your creativity, inspiration, and support in helping us connect personally and meaningfully to their legacy.



During math centers, students collaborated and put their math skills into action through engaging, hands-on activities.



Students guessed which idiom their classmates dressed up as after learning about figurative language. Popular costumes included "under the weather," "break a leg," and "it's raining cats and dogs."



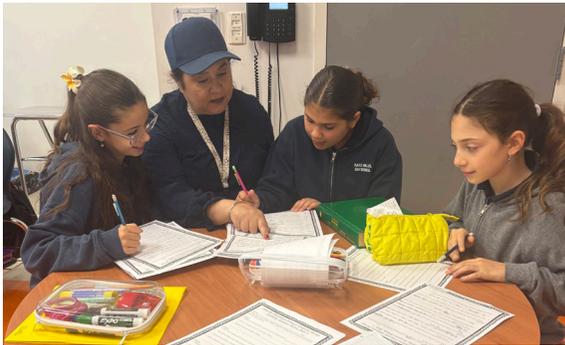
Students created homemade crystals as the conclusion to their rock and minerals unit.



Students actively learned during Chumash class.



Students stepped into the role of paleontologists, mixing their own clay and crafting fossil replicas. They learned how fossils are formed and what they can teach us about Earth's history.



Students became historians as they explored excerpts from William Bradford's original diary—interpreting his words and connecting them to their study of Plymouth Plantation. It was a great opportunity for them to think like historians and see history through the eyes of someone who lived it.



Students who shared the Parsha with their families each week received a cool treat!



Students prepared and presented short Hebrew conversations about different places and even performed creative telephone dialogues.



Rabbi Drang's 5th grade students received EMET badges for their completion of the extra curricular Chumash program RDHC (Rebbe's Daf Ha'Chumash)! Mazal Tov!

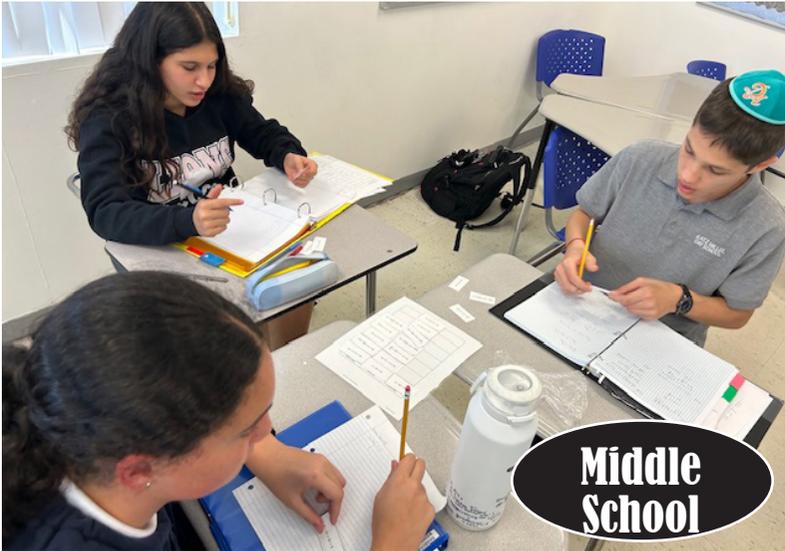


Students created funny and entertaining advertisements about whether it's better to live in the city or in a countryside village using the new Hebrew vocabulary they learned.



Students prepared to "cook" S'mores in their solar ovens!

16 Spotlight by Grade



8th graders practiced solving multi-step math equations through a fun and competitive game. Each team had to decide whether each equation had one solution, infinitely many solutions, or no solution. The first group to finish correctly won a prize! It was a great way to combine problem-solving, teamwork, and a little friendly competition!



8th grade students had the privilege and honor of hearing **Rebbeztin Yocheved Goldberg**, of Boca Raton Synagogue, share her family's remarkable story and her recent journey to Europe. Her message of emunah, perseverance, and connection deeply inspired our students as part of the *Names, Not Numbers*® program. We are grateful for her powerful visit and reminder to learn from and remember our survivors. An article published on October 28, 2025, in *Mishpacha* magazine features her full journey. We shall never forget and continue to learn from our previous and holy survivors!



Bingo! 6th grade students played an engaging and educational game to review before their upcoming science test.



Science you can snack on! 6th graders explored plate tectonics by using graham crackers and frosting to model how Earth's plates move—and then got to taste their experiments!



6th graders practiced comparing integers by playing the card game, War.



8th grade girls learned Chumash with Chavrusas.



8th grade boys took turns presenting the Gemara to their class.



During advisory, students learned about how the human body functions in connection with the bracha of the month, Asher Yatzar. The discussion, led by **Mrs. Tinio**, highlighted the intricate systems of the body and fostered a deeper appreciation for health and gratitude.



7th graders conducted a lab investigation to test for different macromolecules as part of their biochemistry unit. They learned that certain chemical reagents can act as indicators for proteins, lipids, and carbohydrates and were eager to see the signs for a positive or negative result. They put lab equipment such as our hot plates, test tubes, and droppers to great use as they practiced proper lab safety.



The 6th and 7th grade Boys' Night, on December 1st, was a fun and energetic after-school event. The boys enjoyed a delicious pizza dinner before diving into a series of competitive games. Highlights included human tic-tac-toe, a Rubik's Cube showdown, steal the salami, pass the spoon mystery taste buds, and an exciting hula hoop challenge. The evening was filled with teamwork, friendly competition, and lots of laughter.



6th grade Gemara students hosted **Mr. Sina Kahen**—an acclaimed innovator, speaker, and author with over a decade of experience across AI and healthcare. Having worked in over 50 countries with global leaders like Google, Amazon, and Shell, Mr. Kahen shared his insights on the vital synergy between secular studies and high-level Torah scholarship. He inspired the students by illustrating how the "ideal person" integrates worldly knowledge with a deep foundation in Torah.



On December 29, 6th and 7th grade girls gathered for Girls' Night, which began with a meaningful chesed activity. The girls assembled boxes for Bikur Cholim to be distributed to patients in local hospitals, setting a thoughtful and purposeful tone for the evening. Afterward, they participated in a variety of games, filling the space with fun, laughter, and positive energy. The night provided a wonderful opportunity for bonding, connection, and shared joy among the girls.



On December 25, our middle school students were joined by parents and grandparents for a special davening and learning program. It was truly a joy to welcome our families and share the energy, warmth, and magic that make KHDS so special. Thank you to **Rabbi Lintz** for thoughtfully preparing the learning materials and helping make the experience so meaningful for all.



7th and 8th grade students had a special presentation from Communities Confronting Substance Use & Addiction (CCSA) about the dangers of using alcohol and substances. Trained educational presenters—Jewish people in recovery with lived experience with addiction—shared their stories as a powerful message and tool to reinforce the materials and lessons taught through this prevention programming. The combination of listening to someone's personal journey and understanding the science behind addiction is powerful and incredibly effective. We are fortunate to be able to bring such important and impactful programming to our students.

18 The Lions' Den



Maia Shaffer, Athletic Director
Julie Abrams, After School Sports Coordinator

As we write this article, the winter athletic season is in full swing, featuring boys JV basketball, boys varsity basketball, and girls varsity soccer. We also are looking forward to the start of the boys' and girls' 4th-5th grade basketball season. The late fall sports teams have wrapped up their season, and we are incredibly proud of their exceptional performances. Notably, the girls' varsity basketball team made it to the playoffs and advanced all the way to the championship game, finishing in second place. The boys varsity soccer team also performed admirably. Throughout the season, all athletes and coaches displayed tremendous enthusiasm and team spirit. We hope you enjoy the highlights below (as of press time). Go, Lions!



Girls' Varsity Soccer

Coach Kos Donev

The girls "kicked" off the season with enthusiasm and a positive spirit both on and off the field. After winter break, they returned eager to play, showcasing their skills in the first game and maintaining their strong work ethic throughout.



Boys' Varsity Soccer

Coach Kos Donev

In a rebuilding year for the team, the boys showed steady improvement and promise for the next season. Each player gave their best effort and displayed strong competitiveness.



Girls' Varsity Basketball

Coach Matt Bloom

The team, led by captains **Joanna** and **Sadie**, had an impressive undefeated conference record, earning a second straight finals appearance. Although they lost in the finals, the girls displayed remarkable determination and have much to be proud of!



Boys' Varsity Basketball

Coach Matt Bloom

The boys are off to a strong start this season, fueled by talent, determination, and a shared goal of winning a championship.



Girls' 4th-5th Basketball

Coach Gary Tucker

The girls season is right around the corner, and we're excited to get started! This season will focus on skill development, teamwork, and learning the fundamentals of the game in a fun and supportive environment.



Boys' JV Basketball

Coach Simon Goldstein

The boys are excited for the season ahead. Built on teamwork and effort, players are committed to their roles and improving together. The team has made significant progress, both on and off the court, setting the stage for a memorable season.



Boys' 4th-5th Basketball

Coach Steve Nazaire

During the season, the boys will work on building strong fundamentals, growing as teammates, and developing a love for the game in a positive setting.



Boys' 4th-5th Flag Football

Coach Isaac Reich

The team's season highlights included securing a playoff spot as the No. 2 seed, demonstrating strong teamwork and skill development, and showcasing their determination and love for the game throughout the season.



The 8th grade decorating committee, led by the B'not Sherut, transformed the middle school hallways for Thanksgiving! It was wonderful to watch this group design and implement their ideas, getting their classmates excited for the holiday.

Thanksgiving



Students participated in Thanksgiving-themed projects and activities.



The Teddy & Linda Struhl Elementary School was buzzing with energy and excitement during our Thanksgiving STEM Fair! Students rotated through six engaging, hands-on stations that challenged their creativity, curiosity, and critical thinking skills while they had the opportunity to collaborate and problem-solve.

You can always browse our online photo galleries for more pictures at: <https://www.hilleldayschool.org/about-our-school/photo-galleries/>.



20 Holiday Happenings



KHDS lit up the spirit of learning with a full week of school-wide and divisional Chanukah programs and celebrations. The festivities began with a Chanukah-themed dress-up day for students, alongside an exciting dreidel competition, and a beautiful Chanukah breakfast for faculty and staff graciously sponsored by the KHDS PTA.

The Rosalind Henwood Early Childhood Learning Center celebrated with a joyful Chanukah Drive-By Party at **Mrs. Baer's**

home, complete with special treats and beloved guests—our EC Morahs. EC students also delighted in their Annual Chanukah Shows for parents, Chanukah Round Robins, a lively Chanukah Dance Party, and a Gelt Hunt to conclude the week.

The Teddy & Linda Struhl Elementary School added to the excitement with Chanukah Bingo, a spectacular Light Show, their own Gelt Hunt, and the first-ever Maccabiah. Middle School students enjoyed a wide range of engaging activities, including Find the Missing Oil and Gelt, Bingo, a trip day featuring Sky Zone and a Double Dreidel Challenge, an inspirational Kumsitz featuring **Gabe Bauman**, a Chagigah for girls, and a dodgeball tournament for boys.

Throughout the week, students enjoyed delicious sufganiyot and faculty and staff were treated to a special lunch sponsored by KHDS PTA. (see page 9 for the Chanukah Extravaganza In Review)



Chanukah





Financial
Resource
Development



DONATE

Amy Tarlowe, Vice President/FRD Chair
Suzanne Rice, Director of Development

With the school year in full swing, KHDS is buzzing with learning, growth, and ruach in every classroom and hallway. From meaningful memories and joyful moments of connection, our students are thriving thanks to a strong foundation of support from our #KHDSfamily.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our *Major Gifts Society* members who have made a lead gift to our *Annual Campaign*, to our *Capital Campaign* donors who have supported the campus expansion through a dedication, and to our *Atid Legacy Society* members who have made a legacy commitment ensuring the future of KHDS for generations to come.

We are also deeply thankful to those KHDS grandparents who have joined the *Dor L'Dor Society* with a cumulative gift of \$360+ during this school year. Your generosity helps strengthen the bridge between generations and ensures that your values and commitment to Jewish education continue to inspire today's students and tomorrow's leaders.

And to everyone who has supported our *Annual Campaign* in so many meaningful ways—by entering the *Mega Raffle*, making a designated gift, sponsoring a *Day of Learning*, making a tribute donation, or contributing through a general donation—every gift, at every level, makes a real and lasting impact.

Together, your generosity fuels the excellence, warmth, and vitality of our school community. Thank you for partnering with us and for believing in the power of a KHDS education.

We remind our KHDS families that a gift at any level qualifies as participating in our *Every Family Gives* campaign, as we strive for 100% participation.

We are deeply grateful for the collective generosity that makes KHDS a place where students flourish academically, spiritually, and emotionally. Every contribution—large or small—strengthens our community and affirms our shared commitment to Jewish education and future generations. Thank you for standing with KHDS, for investing in our mission, and for helping shape a vibrant and enduring legacy for our children and our school.

FINAL DEADLINE: MARCH 18TH

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The Koppie Cohn Day of Learning Program is endowed in memory of Menashe Koppel Cohn, A"H, by his parents, Naomi & Todd Cohn, and his siblings, Eli Meir, Leora and Tamar.

22 PTA: Here to Help



Message from Anna Jacobs, PTA President

It's hard to believe we're already more than halfway through the school year, and KHDS PTA has been hard at work!

From the *Annual Challah Bake* with Tomchei Shabbos packing to the *Chanukah Extravaganza* including an awesome drone show and picnic, not to mention all the wonderful things we do

for our amazing faculty and staff—it's been an incredibly rewarding few months.

A major highlight was our *Scholastic Book Fair*, complete with an early childhood storytime and a *Torah Comic Book Workshop* for lower and middle school students. We also introduced a moms' shiur and dads' minyan with **Rabbi Schwersenski!** And there's still so much more to come!

We're excited for the *Pre-Pesach Pop Up* in March, along with our favorite, *Teacher Appreciation Week* in May!

As always, the PTA is thrilled to continue partnering with you—our parents and grandparents—to help enrich the school experience for everyone!



With **P**raise, **T**hanks & **A**dmiration

- ❖ Thank you to **Danna Averbook** for coordinating the refreshments for the annual *Middle School Daven and Learn* program.
- ❖ The Swag Shop is open every Tuesday from 8:05 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. The shop is located adjacent to the PTA Patio, just outside the Loewenstern Cafetorium. Please stop by for all your swag and Spirit Day needs. Thank you to co-chairs **Rachel Fraiman** and **Na'ama Rosenberg**.
- ❖ Our Teacher Appreciation Breakfasts are provided to our wonderful faculty and staff each month. Kudos to program chair **Alissa Kroll**.
- ❖ Don't forget to visit the Lost & Found, located on the west side of the Loewenstern Cafetorium in the breezeway. Thank you to **Danna Averbook** for organizing and overseeing.

Chanukah Toy Drive

Thank you to our incredible KHDS families for donating enough games and toys to fill six large bags, which were given to the *Chai Lifeline Toy Drive*. Your generosity truly made a difference. Special thanks to **Abby Feferman** for coordinating!



Rising to the Occasion: Annual Challah Bake



The *PTA Annual Challah Bake*, held on November 13th, was a tremendous success as families came together to participate in this special mitzvah. Wearing KHDS aprons, each family received a bowl filled with ingredients to make five pounds of challah.

While the dough was rising, attendees watched a beautiful video featuring Divrei Torah from administration and uplifting footage of our amazing KHDS students on campus. KHDS parent **Ahron Fraiman** then led everyone in song. The evening concluded with participants joyfully packing boxes for Tomchei Shabbos.

Thank you to the incredible committee of **Melanie David, Rachel Fraiman, Yitty Garden, Jacquelyn Jungreis, Penina Nudell, and Na'ama Rosenberg** who made sure that everything ran seamlessly.

We also express thanks to **Bridget Cohn** for all her expert coordination and to the entire maintenance team for their hard work to ensure the event went off without a hitch. Thank you to **Rabbi Eisenberger** for technical assistance. We are beyond grateful to the countless volunteers who helped making this event possible.



Photo credits: Shlomi Cohen/iPictureMagnet and KHDS PTA

Moms' Night Out Continues

Our *Moms' Night Out* program has been on a roll these past few months, with moms mingling, connecting, and building new friendships through a variety of creative opportunities.

4th and 5th grade moms enjoyed a night out at Yumm Sushi. Thank you to class moms **Jenelle Boda, Julie Ehrlich, Jennifer Glickman, and Coralie Teichman** for organizing such a fun event!



Kindergarten moms enjoyed a night of candy board making led by KHDS moms **Abby Feferman** and **Sara Shulman** of Sweet Like Candy Co. Thank you to **Samantha Abraham** and **Danielle Lazoff** for coordinating and to **Meira Weiss** for hosting and coordinating.



1st-3rd grade moms enjoyed a night out making one of a kind fluid art pieces at Hawaii Fluid Art. Thank you to class moms **Randee Groveman, Tobi Hauptman, Ariel Hopkins, Penina Nudell, Zahava Oppenheimer, and Ariella Strassman** for coordinating.



Men's Morning Minyan

KHDS dads joined for minyan followed by Torah thoughts by our head of school, **Rabbi Schwersenski**, and a coffee cart sponsored by the PTA. Thank you to **Ben Feferman** for coordinating.



PTA Chanukah Gifts and Treats



Book Fair Fun

The *Scholastic Book Fair* brought a full week of reading excitement, special events, and book-buying as each class had the chance to visit the fair. It concluded with special activities for everyone. Early Childhood students enjoyed snacks and story time with **Mrs. Baer, Morah Cara, Morah Ivana, and Rabbi Schwersenski**. Lower school and middle school students took part in a special Torah Comic Book workshop led by KHDS alum **Andrew Galitzer**, where they learned how to bring Torah to life while exploring lessons in resilience, creativity, and persistence. Parents enjoyed a much-appreciated coffee cart while browsing the fair.

A huge thank-you to our amazing Book Fair committee—**Mimi Amsalem, Jennifer Berkowitz, Alissa Kroll, Leah Ravae, and Sarah Stern-Strobel**—for their flawless coordination, and to all our volunteers for making the week run so smoothly.



The PTA collected contributions from each family and shared them with the entire KHDS faculty and staff, including teachers, administrators, maintenance, security, office staff, specials, and support staff, to show our appreciation this Chanukah. Thank you to **Avital Rosenberg** and **Young Mi Skehen** for coordinating and distributing, and to **Alissa Kroll** for helping with distribution.

Teachers were also treated to a festive Teacher Appreciation Breakfast, complete with a hot breakfast and specialty coffee cart. Thank you to **Alissa Kroll** and **Jaime Feld** for organizing. Later in the week, faculty and staff enjoyed a special Chanukah lunch, served by our wonderful volunteers: **Danna Averbok, Abby Feferman, Rachel Fraiman, Leah Ravae, and Avital Rosenberg**.

IN MEMORIAM ~ JONATHAN SCHUMER
KHDS Class of 2011



JONATHAN SCHUMER

דוד

**IT IS NICE TO BE
 IMPORTANT, BUT IT'S
 MORE IMPORTANT
 TO BE NICE**

פותח את ירך
 ומשביע לכל חי רצון



The Boca Ridge community delivered donuts and coffee to the Federation security guards to wish them a happy holiday and thank them for crossing our families safely every morning and keeping our community secure. Thank you to the **Aronovski** family for organizing this thoughtful gesture.



Katz Hillel Day School is a "Makom Torah," a place where Torah is studied.
 As such, dress should conform to what would be appropriate when visiting a synagogue.

The *Hillel Herald* is designed and produced by:
 Suzanne Rice, Director of Development